

# 11/25/2011: Nebraska 20, Iowa 7 (Links)

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

Check out all of these links to content posted on Friday after Iowa's 20-7 loss to No. 22 Nebraska at Memorial Stadium in Lincoln, Neb. Please note, anything with "premium" in parentheses are links that can only be accessed by those logged in as either a paid subscriber or three-day free trial member to *HawkeyeDrive.com*:

**RECAP:** [Huskers humble Hawkeyes in first Big Ten clash](#)

**COMMENTARY:** [Offense picks bad time to sputter \(premium\)](#)

**VIDEO:**

[Marvin McNutt](#)

[James Morris](#)

[James Vandenberg](#)

[Kirk Ferentz](#)

[Riley Reiff](#)

[Tyler Nielsen](#)

[Micah Hyde](#)

[Shaun Prater](#)

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# Huskers humble Hawkeyes in first Big Ten clash

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

LINCOLN, Neb. – If Friday's contest between the Iowa Hawkeyes and Nebraska Cornhuskers is the beginning of a new annual rivalry, then Iowa has a ways to go in making it appealing.

Nebraska, who came in ranked 22nd, flexed its muscles on defense and did just enough on offense to beat the Hawkeyes 20-7 in a game that wasn't as close as the scoreboard at Memorial Stadium would've indicated. The loss caps a second straight 7-5 regular season for Iowa that includes a 4-4 record in Big Ten play.

On this afternoon, Iowa struggled to get any rhythm going on offense. The Hawkeyes only compiled 270 yards of total offense, and the one score – a late 2-yard touchdown run by sophomore running back Marcus Coker – was what prevented Iowa from being shut out for the first time since a 31-0 loss to Illinois in 2000.

Junior quarterback James Vandenberg completed 16-of-35 passes for 182 yards and threw a bad interception in the second half while being chased out of the pocket. Senior wide receiver Marvin McNutt finished with just four catches for 29 yards receiving.

"They do a really good job of cutting off in-routes and crossing routes," Vandenberg said. "They did that today, and it made it tough to shake some guys loose."

While Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz wouldn't go as far as calling it a turning point, the biggest moment of the game

came just before halftime. With the Hawkeyes trailing 3-0 in the second quarter, the Cornhuskers were able to execute a 80-yard scoring drive that lasted 15 plays (most of which came on the ground) and was capped by quarterback Taylor Martinez's touchdown pass to Kyler Reed. The series was also aided by a blatant pass interference call on senior strong safety Jordan Bernstine.

"If we were able to force those guys into a field goal, that would've definitely helped us out," senior cornerback and Omaha native Shaun Prater said. "It would have gave some of our guys confidence on the defense. But things happen, and we just have to put out the fire and keep moving forward."

Nebraska took the 10-0 lead with it into the locker room, and would get a field goal from kicker Brett Maher that made it 13-0 following a 12-play, 82-yard drive.

"It wears on you a little bit, but at the end of the day, I don't feel like that's the No. 1 contributing factor," sophomore linebacker James Morris said about the defense's issues getting off the field. "I feel like it was just a failure to execute the things that we had been coached to do. That's on us as players."

Vandenberg's interception in the fourth quarter led to the touchdown that put this game away for good when Cornhusker running back Rex Burkhead, who set a Nebraska record with 38 carries for 160 yards rushing, scored from two yards out to put Nebraska ahead 20-0.

Iowa now must wait until Dec. 4 to learn where it will be bowling this winter. Where it ends up could hinge on whether No. 17 Michigan beats Ohio State on Saturday and earns a BCS at-large bid with a 10-2 overall record.

But for now, the Hawkeyes will have to regroup. Ferentz said the team would be off until Nov. 29 and then get back to practices before beginning bowl prep for whoever Iowa ends up

drawing.

“Our focus today was coming in here and hoping to get the eighth win, and that’s not going to happen. It didn’t happen today,” Ferentz said. “So now we shoot for that in our next game out, and we’ll see what we can do about improving in the areas we didn’t play well enough in. We’ll see what we can do about growing and getting that eighth win.”

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## **COMMENTARY: Offense picks bad time to sputter (premium)**

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

LINCOLN, Neb. – When the 2011 season first began, many believed the success of the Iowa Hawkeyes would hinge on the play of their offense as opposed to the stout defenses fans became accustomed to seeing the past few years.

But in the regular season finale against No. 22 Nebraska on Friday, it was the play of the offense that had to be most disappointing in Iowa’s 20-7 loss at Memorial Stadium in what was dubbed the inaugural “Heroes Game.”

Now part of it was the play of Nebraska’s defense, which finally looked the part of what many saw it being back in the summer. But this was about as putrid a performance put together by the Iowa offense as there has been in quite some time.

From a statistical standpoint, Iowa featured one of the Big Ten’s most efficient quarterbacks, one of the most reliable

running backs, and probably the league's best wide receiver. Yet it could only muster 270 yards of total offense on Friday, and had it not been for a late 2-yard touchdown run by sophomore running back Marcus Coker, Iowa would've been shut out for the first time since 2000.

For most of the game, senior wide receiver Marvin McNutt, who ended up with four catches for 29 yards receiving, was stuck on two catches for one yard receiving.

Let me repeat that for emphasis – two catches for one yard receiving. We're talking about probably the best wideout in the Big Ten and the best wideout Iowa has ever had. I don't mention this to dog McNutt after a rough performance, but because that's not what anyone (including him) would ever anticipate being his final numbers in a game of this magnitude.

From a yardage standpoint, this wasn't the worst showing by junior quarterback James Vandenberg this season. In fact, he had three performances prior to Friday's game where he was held under 200 yards passing. But Vandenberg started this game 1-of-6 on Iowa's first two drives, and never seem to be rebound from the sluggish start.

Now the defense doesn't get a free pass for what transpired. Two of Nebraska's scoring drives were aided by atrocious penalties coming from the Hawkeye secondary. But for most of this game, it played well enough to put Iowa in position to capitalize, and the offense never did.

I wouldn't attribute this to the short week of preparation, however. The one other time Iowa's offense was as bad as it was Friday came at Penn State last month after the Hawkeyes came off a bye week.

Nebraska came to play, make no mistake. But when Iowa comes into this game having only been held to single digits once all season, only coming away with seven points and getting humbled

like this in front of a national TV audience doesn't do the Hawkeyes any favors going forward.

Iowa now has one game remaining, most likely against Texas A&M in the Meineke Car Care Bowl of Texas (this is pure speculation on my part at this moment), to regain stride offensively before it loses McNutt and at least two (perhaps three) starting offensive linemen. How the next five weeks or so are spent fixing the offense will be the most intriguing thing to watch during Iowa's bowl preparation.

Because if things don't get fixed, it won't matter if it's Texas A&M or anyone else that lies ahead. Iowa will continue to struggle offensively, and that's not how the Hawkeyes want to end 2011.

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## **Iowa-Nebraska video: Shaun Prater**

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

LINCOLN, Neb. – Iowa senior cornerback Shaun Prater had five tackles and a pass break-up for the Hawkeyes on Friday in their 20-7 loss to No. 22 Nebraska at Memorial Stadium.

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# Iowa-Nebraska video: Micah Hyde

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

LINCOLN, Neb. – Iowa junior cornerback Micah Hyde recorded seven tackles and forced a fumble in the Hawkeyes' 20-7 loss to No. 22 Nebraska on Friday at Memorial Stadium.

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# Iowa-Nebraska video: Tyler Nielsen

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

LINCOLN, Neb. – Iowa senior linebacker Tyler Nielsen finished with 11 tackles for the Hawkeyes in their 20-7 loss to No. 22 Nebraska on Friday at Memorial Stadium.

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# Iowa-Nebraska video: Riley

# Reiff

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

LINCOLN, Neb. – Iowa junior offensive tackle Riley Reiff made his 25th consecutive start at left tackle for the Hawkeyes on Friday in their 20-7 loss to No. 22 Nebraska at Memorial Stadium. Iowa compiled 270 yards of total offense in defeat.

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# Iowa-Nebraska video: Kirk Ferentz

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

LINCOLN, Neb. – Iowa head coach Kirk Ferentz addressed the media in a postgame press conference following the Hawkeyes' 20-7 loss to No. 22 Nebraska on Friday at Memorial Stadium. The loss dropped Iowa to 7-5 overall and 4-4 in the Big Ten for the second consecutive season entering its upcoming bowl game.

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# Iowa-Nebraska video: James Vandenberg

By Brendan Stiles

*HawkeyeDrive.com*

LINCOLN, Neb. – Iowa junior quarterback James Vandenberg completed 16-of-35 pass attempts for 182 yards and an interception on Friday in the Hawkeyes' 20-7 loss to No. 22 Nebraska at Memorial Stadium.

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# Iowa-Nebraska video: James Morris

By Brendan Stiles

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LINCOLN, Neb. – Iowa sophomore linebacker James Morris recorded 13 tackles for the Hawkeyes in their 20-7 loss to No. 22 Nebraska on Friday at Memorial Stadium.